

## Cricket Nets (Stage 2)

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Well I had a quick holiday (so no progress other than slab curing for a week) and since I got back it's rained. A lot. In between sometimes torrential downpours and impressive thunderstorms I have ducked out and done a couple of things - minor, but for anyone interested in doing similar, worthwhile to know and a couple of good tips (things to avoid mostly!).

The first job was cutting in an expansion joint - this is something we should have done on the day, preferably with a wet saw a few hours after finishing - "green" concrete is much easier to cut and drill than old concrete. You can place something in the slab as it's poured, but it makes it difficult to work around - and a very flat and level pitch is paramount in my humble opinion so you don't want funny bumps and lips halfway down - these days the go is to pour the slab / footpath / driveway / cricket pitch and then cut in the expansion (or controlled cracking joints). This gives a 4mm gap without a lip or dip.

In my case, as I'd left it to cure for a few days, a crack had already developed, roughly halfway. It's not a problem - with the amount of reo steel in the slab the pitch isn't going to break up for a hundred years - and you couldn't even feel it; it won't make any difference especially when under the turf. Most pitches would be crazed with cracks we just don't see them. The crack was ~11m from batsman, ~9 metres from bowlers end - an ideal place actually, close enough to the middle to prevent cracking somewhere else by allowing good expansion but well short of a "bouncer" length from a fast bowler.

I picked a straight line through the crack's meandering. In hindsight probably a bad thing - I should have put the joint in say 100mm from the crack - as parts of the crack were so close and parallel to the new joint that the concrete might flake off. But it probably won't and won't matter anyway, given where it is. (postscript - it did - see pic far right)

I lined up a sturdy piece of timber and hammered a couple of stakes into the ground to wedge and hold it, then ran my angle grinder across a few times - this made the expansion joint nice and straight. Next break in rain I'll run a bead of silicon across it - probably unnecessary but I will anyway.

I also cut in expansion joints at both stump holes - I have a fair bit of concrete past the stumps at both ends and the pitch could certainly do with a couple more controlled cracking joints. Obviously being under the crease lines at either end it won't matter either.

Next I smashed out the bricks that were used to create the stump holes at either end. A few minutes with a crowbar and elbow grease made short work of the bricks, but a small amount of damage to the corner edging of the stump holes. It doesn't matter, but for anyone else - pull the bricks out early, before the concrete sets. However, (unbeknownst to me) someone had laid a longer piece of timber under the bricks at the batsman end (to lift the bricks up higher) but it meant the timber was well and truly concreted in and couldn't be prised up and out.

So I drilled some hole and bashed and levered it with the crowbar until I had the timber out.

Then I filled the stump holes, first with larger pebbles and bits of brick (for good drainage) and then with fine pebbles and left over road base, and finally with a good clay soil packed down hard - it should bake in the sun if it ever re-appears and be a good firm base for real stumps if I want to use them.

All week I have been chasing the synthetic turf supplier, which shipped me their last roll of 28m x 1.83 (not enough to cover all the bowlers wings but I'll add some more later - minor issue) on Tuesday 27/11 and it finally arrived yesterday

arvo (Friday 7/12 - 9 business days later after getting lost). I'm pretty annoyed at the courier company as they were supposed to ring ahead and despite clear instructions from supplier on the package they didn't, they dropped it off at my front door instead of at the pitch (which is why I wanted them to call so I could be here and direct them to pitch for dropoff) and to top it off drove off through newly laid and watered stabilised roadbase on my driveway despite red cones blocking that section - he even crushed 2 of the cones!